

# Magazine Feature Section

## CAN TEUTONS DEFEAT WINTER WHEN NAPOLEON FAILED?

Here is a comparison between the conditions under which Napoleon and the Austro-Germans entered Russia.

**Napoleon.**  
Had 500,000 men.  
Many troops disloyal.  
Poor supply system.  
No lines of communication.  
Poor financial backing.  
Troops exhausted.

**Von Hindenburg.**  
Has more than million.  
All loyal and patriotic.  
Splendid System.  
Many of them.  
Almost unlimited.  
Troops in fine trim.

Napoleon also was farther away from his base of supplies and had no means of communication such as are afforded by present day conveniences. His army also lacked that preparedness for which the Germans are famed. During their advances all bridges have been repaired, roads built through forests and railroads, destroyed by the Russians, rebuilt.

Will the allied Austro-German forces under Generals Von Hindenburg and Mackensen meet with Napoleon's fate next winter when their forces are compelled to undergo the rigors of a winter in Russia?

Opinion in Paris is that a fate similar to that met by the great general of the French more than a century ago awaits the Austrians and the Germans during the coming winter.

The foe is advancing into Russia under circumstances comparable to those that lured the First Consul to defeat. The troops of the Czar are yielding as they did to Napoleon, but at the same time they are destroying everything left behind and the Austro-Germans may find themselves in the interior of the country without food or shelter when the Russian winter, that great undefeated foe, sweeps down upon them to freeze the blood of the soldiers with his cold breath.

The circumstances under which Von Hindenburg and Mackensen are now operating in Russia are far more favorable in many aspects than those under which Napoleon made his invasion. The forces of the Austro-German are almost twice the size of the Grand Army led by the First Consul.

The Austro-German troops are better trained and better equipped and are more fired by patriotism than were the troops of Napoleon. His corps were made up partly by Prussians and Austrians who were under forced service and hated Napoleon. In his victories at Jena and elsewhere he had arranged as a part of the peace treaty that the Prussians and Austrians were to supply him with a certain number of troops on demand, and it was with a force including such men undergoing forced service that he undertook the invasion of Russia.

### TEUTONS BETTER EQUIPPED.

The Austro-Germans are better equipped and better supplied than were the troops of Napoleon. The French government at the time was almost impoverished, the French revolution having been followed by the invasion of Italy and the campaign in Egypt, and the whole country having tired of war. Had it not been for the fear in which the great leader was held the whole nation would have revolted against further war or conquests.

So Napoleon was not furnished a large army and his requests for provisions and equipment were curtailed.

Under these circumstances, it will be recalled, Napoleon on June 22, 1812, declared war on Russia and crossed the Niemen into Russian territory with an army of more than 500,000 men. The Russians, in accordance with the plans of their generals, avoided battles, retreating before the advance of the French. But as they are doing at present they devastated the country through which they passed, leaving nothing in the fields that the French might use in replenishing their stores.

Napoleon with the main body of the Grand Army pursued the retreating Russians and reached Wilna June 28, where he remained until the middle of August before continuing his advance toward Moscow in pursuit of the Russians. Already the effects of the destructive policy of the Russians began to be felt in the French army: as 25,000 sick and wounded filled the hospitals and 10,000 dead horses strewed the road from Wilna. The death of the horses caused 125 pieces of artillery to be abandoned.

At Smolensk on August 17, 1812,

30,000 Russians made a stand against the French. Three furious assaults upon this strongly fortified town were repulsed by the Russians; but during the night the inhabitants set fire to the town, which was soon reduced to ashes, and fled with the army.

The Russians continued their retreat toward Moscow, pursued by the French. Because the troops were not satisfied with General Barclay de Tolly's strategy of fleeing the foe, the Czar removed him and sent General Kutusoff to take charge.

### AT MOSCOW.

On September 14, 1812, the French army came in sight of the great city of Moscow and beheld its lofty steeples and copper domes glittering in the sun. When the city burst upon his gaze, Napoleon exclaimed: "Behold, yonder is the celebrated city of the Czar." The French troops rushed forward and entered Moscow on the same day, but were surprised to find its 500,000 inhabitants had fled. Napoleon took up his residence in the Kremlin, the ancient palace of the Czars.

Before Moscow had been abandoned by its inhabitants, Count Rostopshin, the Russian governor, had taken measures to burn the city after the French should enter. Accordingly several nights later a vast fire broke out in all quarters of the city and in a few hours the holy citadel of the Russians was in flames, the blaze having been started by convicts that the governor had freed for the purpose. The greater part of the city was reduced to ashes and the French were compelled to retreat to a neighboring village.

Napoleon returned a few days later, however, and made his headquarters in a part of the Kremlin that had not been destroyed by the flames.

The destruction of Moscow deprived the French of winter quarters. The Russian armies, which now were vastly superior to the French, threatened to cut off all communication of supplies with France, and Napoleon's peace proposals were rejected. In this critical situation the little general found himself compelled to order a retreat to Poland. On October 19, 1812, Moscow was evacuated.

### BATTLE WITH WINTER.

The horrors of this retreat exceed anything in the annals of war. The Russians sent out their Cossacks who greatly annoyed the French rear and cut off straggling parties, while the main division of the Russian army pursued the retreating French troops and forced them to contest every inch of the way. The French army was encumbered with



RUSSIAN TROOPS SURRENDERING

its sick and dying. On November 6 an enemy far more terrible than the bullets of the Russians or the lances

of the Cossacks, made its appearance. This enemy was a Russian winter of unusual severity.

The thermometer sank to 18 degrees below zero, and the cold wind howled furiously over the vast step-

pes. The French army was becoming weaker and weaker by the casualties of battle and by hunger, cold



GENERAL VON HINDENBURG



RUSSIAN SOLDIERS PRAYING BEFORE THE CZAR

One of the bridges, unable to bear the weight of the crowd upon it, broke, precipitating into the stream thousands whose screams were heard above the roar of Russian cannon and the cheers of the Cossacks. Many who attempted to cross over the other bridges were swept off by the Russian artillery or thrown over by their confused comrades. The following spring when the ice melted, 36,000 bodies were found in the channel of the river.

This mournful disaster completed the destruction of the Grand Army of Napoleon. When the French army reached the Niemen the rear guard under Marshal Ney was reduced to 30 men. It was this body that had stood the brunt of the Russian attacks during the retreat.

### LAST OF REAR GUARD.

The veteran marshal, bearing a musket and pointing it at the pursuing enemy, was the last of the Grand Army to leave Russian territory. Napoleon already had left his troops and gone by sledge to Paris. His losses in this campaign were 125,000 men killed in battle; 132,000 died from hunger, cold and fatigue, and 133,000 were captured—making his total loss 450,000.

Thus started the series of defeats that led to the capture of Paris by Austria, Prussia and other allies and Napoleon's retirement to the island of Elba. He returned later to be defeated at Waterloo and then to be exiled to St. Helena where he died.

Cruel winter that even the great Napoleon himself could not defeat won the great victory that led to the downfall of the world's greatest army leader. Will the Austro-Germans in their present mad drive farther and farther into the interior of Russia be able to face this inexorable foe?

It is pointed out by some that they are better equipped than Napoleon in a hundred different ways. He had relied on capturing rich stores in Moscow and along the way; he had hoped for a place of shelter during the winter in the great city of the Czars. When these two important things were denied him by fate he had to yield.

Some credit German preparedness of which we hear so much with being able to overcome these barriers of nature. In the recent campaign that resulted in the capture of Warsaw, the Austro-Germans were able to bring up their wagon trains with great rapidity. Roads were built through forests hitherto impassable. Bridges were reconstructed and railroads were built so that now there is an almost direct line of communication from their base of supplies to their present front, a line not only of good roads but even of railroads.

Yet, despite these advantages, will the Germans be able to stand the rigors of a Russian winter? The Russians, long inured to severe cold, will have a great advantage over their foe when their great natural aid comes to their assistance.

Will the Austro-Germans be able to bear it or will they have to retreat with terrible loss as did Napoleon and his Grand Army more than 100 years ago?

and fatigue. The roads were strewn with dead and dying men and horses. The starving troops fell upon the dead and dying horses and devoured their flesh like famished wolves, and many who had remained with the dying embers of the bivouac fires fell asleep to awaken no more. All discipline was gone and all the heavy artillery was abandoned to the pursuing Russians.

The main Russian army, under Kutusoff, numbering 100,000 men, advanced by a route parallel to that of the French army while another army pressed upon the French rear, with the Cossacks harassing the retreating troops. On November 9 Napoleon and his troops reached Smolensk where they rested until the 15th when the disastrous retreat was renewed. The French rear guard under Marshal Ney almost was totally destroyed.

In the battle of Krasnoi, November 16, 17 and 18, the French lost 30,000 men in killed, wounded and prisoners. Ney's fortunate but dangerous passage of the frozen Dnieper river was one of the most daring feats in history.

The troops crossed the thin ice in safety but the wagons containing the sick and wounded sank into the cold waters amid the shrieks of the unfortunate sufferers.

The most horrible of this series of horrors was the passage of the Beresina. While the French were passing over the bridges the enemy appeared and opened fire on them.